

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
<u>Project Name:</u> Erickson Break Request	<u>Proposed Implementation Date:</u> December 2012
<u>Proponent:</u> Erickson Farms Inc., 101 Erickson Rd., Box 368, Scobey, MT 59263	
<u>Type and Purpose of Action:</u> Mark Erickson of Erickson Farms Inc. requested to break 272.7 acres of expiring CRP land on State lease #8288. The current CRP contract expired on September 30, 2012. Mr. Erickson wishes to utilize the expiring CRP acreage for small grain production. The tract was burned in October 2012 to remove vegetation in preparation for a small grain crop in 2013.	
<u>Location:</u> NW4, N2SW4, SW4SW4 of Section 12 – T37N – R47E in Daniels County, MT.	<u>County:</u> Daniels

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	The proponent, Erickson Farms Inc., has submitted a break request in writing to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The request will be reviewed per DNRC land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod. FWP was solicited for comment on April 24, 2012 and responded in writing. NRCS and FSA will be involved.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant the proponent permission to change 272.7 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover to small grain production. No Action Alternative: Deny the proponent permission to change 272.7 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover to small grain production.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N]	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
		N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?		Soils are primarily Williams loam, Zahill loam, and complexes of the two. These soils are class III and class IV soils and well suited for farming. The 3 soil types meet all of the DNRC's breaking criteria for lands other than native sod. Removing the permanent cover will make the soil more susceptible to erosion; however, the continuous cropping methods used by our lessee should ensure erosion does not become a problem. No unusual geologic features or fragile, compactable, or unstable soils are present.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>Action: Removing the permanent vegetation may increase the likelihood of erosion, but erosion is not anticipated to increase with proper farming techniques. No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated. Lessee would be required to reseed all eroding areas to permanent cover if erosion becomes a problem in the future.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>Small grain crop production would utilize the soils available water similar to the tame grasses that are present. A grass waterway would be left intact to ensure erosion is controlled therefore preventing sedimentation and contamination.</p> <p>Action: The project is not anticipated to impact the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface water.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to air quality are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to air quality will occur.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any plant species of concern or potential concern. The present tame grass stand would be broken up and small grain crops would be annually planted and harvested.</p> <p>Action: Vegetation cover would be altered from expiring CRP acreage (tame grass) to annually seeded cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present in the current stand of vegetation.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified 2 species of concern. The database lists the Iowa Darter and Northern Redbelly Dace as species of concern. The listed species are fish species and no impacts to their preferred environments are anticipated. The current stand of CRP grass was likely used for nesting habitat by bird species and as a bedding, resting, and hiding area for the area's wildlife. Removing the CRP will displace the animals into the surrounding landscape. The annual production of small grains would add a food source to the area.</p> <p>Action: No substantial impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
9.UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?	A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified 2 species of concern. The database lists the Iowa Darter and Northern Redbelly Dace as species of concern. The listed species are fish species and no impacts to their preferred environments are anticipated. No plant species of concern or wetlands are present within the project area. Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.
10.HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	Action: The acreage proposed to be broken has been disturbed in the past and does not contain any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources. No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.
11.AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	The project area currently consists of a mixture of grazing lands, agricultural lands, and CRP lands. This project area is not near a prominent topographic feature, no excessive noise or light would be produced, and it is not visible from a populated or scenic area. Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.
12.DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.
13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	[Y/N]POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.

